

REGION 6

STRATEGIC PLAN
2004-2008

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

April 2004

VISION

*“Working with communities, industry, and government
for a cleaner and healthier environment for the people
of the south-central United States.”*

*Richard E. Greene
Regional Administrator*

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page

Executive Summary

SECTION 1 - Region 6 Environmental Challenges	1
--	---

SECTION II - Partnerships	5
--	---

State of Texas	TX
State of Arkansas	AR
State of Louisiana	LA
State of New Mexico	NM
State of Oklahoma	OK
Tribes	Tribes

SECTION III - Region 6 Partnership Statement and Use of Collaboration	6
--	---

SECTION IV - Resources

FY2004 Resources	7
------------------------	---

SECTION V - Strategies	8
-------------------------------------	---

Goal 1 - Clean Air and Global Climate Change

Objective 1: Healthier Outdoor Air

1.1.1 More People Breathing Cleaner Air	10
1.1.2 Reduced Risk from Toxic Air Pollutants	14

Objective 2: Healthier Indoor Air	18
--	----

Objective 4: Radiation

1.4.1 Enhance Radiation Protection	22
1.4.2 Maintain Emergency Response Readiness	26

Objective 5: Reduce Greenhouse Gas Intensity	30
---	----

Goal 2 - Clean and Safe Water

Objective 1: Protect Human Health

2.1.1 Water Safe to Drink	34
---------------------------------	----

Objective 2: Protect Water Quality

2.2.1 Improve Water Quality on a Watershed Basis	38
2.2.2 Improve Coastal and Ocean Waters	44

Goal 3 - Land Preservation and Restoration

Objective 1: Preserve Land

3.1.1 Reduce Waste Generation and Increase Recycling	48
3.1.2 Manage Hazardous Wastes and Petroleum Products Properly	52

Objective 2: Restore Land

3.2.1 Prepare for and Respond to Accidental and Intentional Releases	58
3.2.2 Clean Up and Reuse Contaminated Land	62
3.2.3 Maximize Potentially Responsible Party Participation at Superfund Sites	68

Goal 4 - Healthy Communities and Ecosystems

Objective 1: Chemical, Organism and Pesticide Risks

4.1.1 Reduce Exposure to Toxic Pesticides	72
4.1.3 Reduce Chemical and Biological Risks	76
4.1.4 Reduce Risks at Facilities	80

Objective 2: Communities

4.2.2 Restore Community Health	84
4.2.3 Assess and Clean Up Brownfields	90
4.2.4 Sustain and Restore US/Mexico Border Ecosystems	94

Objective 3: Ecosystems

4.3.1 Protect and Restore Ecosystems	98
4.3.2 Increase Wetlands	102

Goal 5 - Compliance and Environmental Stewardship

Objective 1: Improve Compliance	
5.1.1 Compliance Assistance	106
5.1.2 Compliance Incentives	110
5.1.3 Monitoring and Enforcement	114
Objective 2: Improve Environmental Performance through Pollution Prevention and Innovation	
5.2.1 Prevent Pollution & Promote Environmental Stewardship by Government and the Public	118
5.2.2 Prevent Pollution & Promote Environmental Stewardship by Business	122
5.2.3 Business and Community Innovation	126
5.2.4 Environmental Policy Innovation	130
Objective 3: Build Tribal Capacity	134
Objective 4: Enhance Science and Research	138

SECTION VI - Cross-Cutting Issues

Environmental Information Strategy	143
Regional Environmental Justice Strategy	145
Reduction of Env. Health Risks to Children and the Aging	147
Regional Energy Strategy	149
Region 6 Agriculture Sector Strategic Plan	151
Strategic Management of Human Capital	155
Homeland Security	157
Innovating for Better Environmental Results: Region 6 Innovation Strategy	159

SECTION VII - Accountability

Region 6 Accountability Plan	163
---	------------

SECTION I
ENVIRONMENTAL CHALLENGES

Region 6 Environmental Challenges

Region 6 boundaries include the states of Arkansas, Louisiana, New Mexico, Oklahoma, and Texas. These states have a combined population of 33,263,896 and encompass 620,878 square miles. There are also 66 sovereign Indian Nations within Region 6 boundaries that own approximately 9 million acres of land.

Region 6 geography is composed of rolling prairies, arid deserts, mountains, swamps and bayous, great rivers, gulf beaches, forests and the U.S./Mexico border. This varied geography and its natural resources have contributed to the economic growth the area has enjoyed over the past 30 years. Currently, Region 6 produces 56% of the nation's refined oil, 43% of its cotton and 24% of its cattle and poultry. In 2002, Texas accounted for 18% of total U.S. computer and electronic exports. The Port of Houston and the Port of New Orleans accounts for a large percentage of the nation's imports, and the U.S. Mexico Border is the nation's primary gateway for transporting goods to and from Mexico.

As the Region's economy has grown, so has its population. During the last twenty years, the population of Region 6 has increased by 8,214,186 people. Not only has the population of the Region increased, it has also become more diverse. Today, minorities account for 42.3% of the Region's total population. The Hispanic population alone has increased from 14.5% in 1980 to 23.5% today.

The economic and population growth noted above has not occurred without environmental consequences. Some of the major environmental challenges we face to today include the following:

Air Pollution - A complex combination of industrial, economic, political and meteorological factors create a uniquely difficult challenge to clean air in Region 6. States in our Region constitute some of the most rapidly growing areas of the country. This results in more vehicles and rising energy requirements, both of which can lead to increased emissions into the atmosphere. This, combined with a natural resistance to lifestyle changes and stagnant summer climates, contribute to the challenges we face. Ozone, air toxics and fine particulate matter are the primary challenges to clean air in Region 6.

Water Pollution - Most of our large water supply systems use surface water as a drinking water source. Storm water and agriculture runoff are the primary sources of polluted runoff. Although more than 93% of the population in Region 6 receives drinking water that meets all health based standards, forty percent of our rivers and streams are impaired.

Our rivers and streams can also be impaired by soils that contain deposits of arsenic or salts, and drought, which causes low-flow conditions and elevated water temperatures. Despite improvements, municipal sewage treatment plants remain a source of pollution in rivers because population growth increases the burden on our municipal facilities.

Gulf of Mexico Hypoxia Zone - One of the Region's and the Nation's most significant environmental problems is hypoxia, or low dissolved oxygen, in the Gulf of Mexico. A large area of bottom water on the Inner Continental Shelf off Louisiana's coast exhibits hypoxia from spring to fall of each year, which threatens the health of the ecosystem. The size of this zone varies from year to year. In the summer of 2002, the zone was 8580 square miles, while in the summer of 2003, the zone was only 3300 square miles. Gulf hypoxia is caused by a combination of water column stratification and excessive nutrient loading, especially nitrogen, from the Mississippi and Atchafalya Rivers.

Hazardous Wastes from Chemical and Petroleum Facilities - The Texas and Louisiana coasts are home to numerous chemical facilities and refineries. Tons of hazardous wastes are generated from these chemical and petroleum industries. Although refineries and petrochemical facilities have improved waste control and are using new technologies to reduce or eliminate hazardous wastes, it is important that we track these hazardous materials from production to disposal, and keep citizens informed about potential dangers.

Toxic Waste Sites - Most toxic waste sites in Region 6 are located close to where people live and work - the auto repair shop that uses toxic solvents to clean engines; the dry cleaner that uses volatile chemicals in laundering; the factory that manufactures metal goods; or the garbage dump that accepts industrial waste. Some of these sites are abandoned and create significant environmental impacts on the surrounding communities. Region 6 uses a variety of authorities to address the acute and chronic environmental problems associated with these abandoned sites. There are currently 88 active projects on the National Priorities List in Region 6. Region 6 also has the largest number of underground injection wells in the nation. Billions of gallons of oilfield waste are disposed into these deep underground formations each year. As a result, strict control of these sites is necessary to assure that our water systems are not harmed.

Unsustainable U.S. Mexico Border Population Growth - A unique part of Region 6 is the 1,200-mile border that Texas and New Mexico share with Mexico. The border is the most rapidly growing area in the Region. This growth has placed a greater demand on land and energy, has increased traffic congestion, and increased waste generation. Unfortunately, these areas do not typically have the infrastructure necessary to provide for basic protection of human health and/or the environment. Further, the economy in this area is not conducive to financing the necessary capital improvement projects. Although the current conditions threaten the area's biodiversity, air and water quality, and human health, the problem is particularly acute in regard to water resources.

Environmental Justice - Some of the most serious Environmental Justice issues facing our country today are in Region 6. With 1200 miles of the U.S. Mexico Border and 56% of petro-chemical manufacturing capacity in the United States, the region generates 40% of all the hazardous waste in the Nation and disposes of or treats 5% of the nation's hazardous waste. Region 6 has a major role and responsibility for addressing the concerns facing the communities around these facilities. Some of our poorer communities are disproportionately exposed to environmental harms and risks.

Environmental Protection for Tribal Lands - As noted earlier, Region 6 is home to 66 sovereign Indian Nations. The drinking water provided by the 66 tribal public water supply systems (PWSS's) in New Mexico Indian country is not in step with the national average of 92% compliance. Currently, only 74% of the tribal population is drinking water that meets all health based standards. Solid waste is also a concern. More than 600 open dumps are estimated to exist in Indian country. Uncontrolled open dumps can contain pesticides and other chemicals that may leach into ground water. Many tribes lack adequate infrastructure to reduce waste streams and recycle materials such as appliances, automobiles, and tires.

Brownfields - Many areas in Region 6 that were once used for industrial and commercial purposes have been abandoned. These areas are known as "brownfields." Some of these properties are contaminated, while others are simply perceived to be polluted. The potential contamination associated with these sites often deters lenders, investors, and developers from investing in redevelopment. Not only are these blighted areas eyesores, they can also create safety and health risks for residents, drive up unemployment, and foster a sense of hopelessness.

To meet the environmental challenges outlined above, we will continue to work with our partners and stakeholders to identify and implement the most effective environmental protection programs available. The balance of this plan is dedicated to outlining specific strategies, resources, programs and tools that we will use during the next five years to protect our vital environmental resources and improve public health.

